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ABSTRACT

An experiment was designed to determine whether kindergarten children could recognize the authorship of a piece of prose by the style of the writing. Specifically, the experiment examined whether, at the age when reading instruction typically begins, children are capable of appreciating stylistic properties of text that are almost universally edited out of instructional materials. Thirteen children were briefly exposed in a naturalistic setting to two works by each of five authors of children's stories. When they listened to tapes of a third work by each of the authors, six of the children were able to correctly identify the authorship of three or more of the five stories. The other seven children identified one or fewer correctly (three of these did not complete the task). The results suggest that at least some five-year-old children have the ability to appreciate and discriminate among the literary styles available in trade publications intended for their age group. (Author/FI)

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Technical Report No. 181

FIVE-YEAR-OLDS' RECOGNITION OF AUTHORSHIP BY LITERARY STYLE

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Abstract

In a pilot study, 13 kindergarteners were briefly exposed in a naturalistic setting to 2 works by each of 5 childrens' authors. When they listened to tapes of a third work by each of the 5 authors, 6 of the children were able to correctly identify the authorship of 3 or more of the 5 stories. The other 7 children identified one or fewer correctly (3 of these did not complete the task).

Five-Year-Olds' Recognition of Authorship by Literary Style

An experiment designed to determine whether kindergarteners could recognize the authorship of a piece of prose by the style[1] of the writing was undertaken as a pilot for a larger-scale experiment with slightly older children. The hypothesis was that at the age when reading instruction typically begins, children are capable of appreciating stylistic properties of text (syntactic, rhetorical, metrical, and lexical) that are almost universally edited out of instructional materials. Trade books designated for this age group do not suffer nearly so much from this flaw as basal readers do, but few contain the range of linguistic and rhetorical structures that characterize the variety of styles available in so-called picture books designed to be read to 3- to 7-year-olds.[2] Rather, owing to the strict constraints imposed by the publishers of basal readers on sentence length, vocabulary, and story length, these works have to be designed in such a way that they are devoid of most characteristics of individual style. If it can be shown that children attend to and appreciate stylistic differences, then it would seem to follow that expecting them to read such basal readers is, to say the least, inconsiderate. At best it is pointless, at worst it is counterproductive. Is it possible that Johnny doesn't learn to read because there is no thrill in being able to read:

Rabbit said, "I can run.
I can run fast.
You can't run, Turtle.

You can't run fast."

Turtle said, "Look, Rabbit.

See the park.

You and I will run.

We'll run to the park."

(from "Rabbit and Turtle" in Clymer, Parr, Gates, & Robinson, 1977, p. 60)

[This is the beginning of a retelling of the story of the race between the hare and the tortoise.]

or

When Suzu looked in the weeds, she didn't see Pete.

But she did see a big yellow butterfly.

Ben came down from the tree.

"You didn't find me," he said.

(from "Hide and Seek" in Clymer, Martin, & Gates, 1977, p. 128)

[This is from a story about a hide and seek game.]

or

"I'm sick of green," Rita said to herself. "Too much green is like too much candy. A little green is nice, but not too much." When the sun set, Rita took off the magic glasses. She never wore them again.

(Puneky, 1978, p. 144)

[This is the end of a story about some glasses which granted a girl's

wish that everything be green, but which could not be removed until sunset.]

Passages like these might have a hard time competing even with something as boring as sixth-time reruns of Flintstones cartoons. What if you offered Dr. Seuss and Maurice Sendak and Russell Hoban to Johnny instead?

What we are suggesting is that if children can tell the difference between Beatrix Potter and Margaret Wise Brown, by their writing style, then they can surely distinguish between the two of them, for example, and A Duck is a Duck (Clymer, Parr, Gates, & Robinson, 1977). If they can, and if they prefer the stylistic complexities of the former, as basic principles of attention theory would suggest, then requiring them to read the colorless, artificial prose of basals for two or three or even six years seems pointless at best; at worst, it wastes valuable time that could be spent in more profitable ways and risks boring the children and conveying to them that there is nothing interesting to be learned in books, or even in school.

To put it another way, the use of children's literature in beginning reading programs might motivate children who are not motivated by the prospect of learning how to read so that they can read the literary equivalent of Pablum or Muzak. Children that come to first grade motivated to learn to read will probably learn to read regardless of what method and materials are used, although they may become restless and "turned off" when they perceive the enormous gap between what they are read at home and what they are expected to read in school. But it is the children who come to first grade with little prior knowledge of the wonders of books for whom

motivation is a critical factor. To motivate them, the early materials will have to be intrinsically worth reading--i.e., enjoyable--because it is likely that these children will find no reason to work to learn to read if the only pay-off is approval from the teacher. Learning to read is its own reward when you know that there are many things you will want to read. If a child does not know this, it may be no particular thrill, and he or she may feel it is not worth the bother.

Method

Subjects

The participants in this experiment were 13 children enrolled in the kindergarten class of a day care center (where the children of one of the investigators were enrolled) in a midwestern university community of 95,000. There were five girls and eight boys, ranging in age from 5.0 to 6.1 years. These children had not begun formal reading instruction, although two of them could read unfamiliar texts with some facility. The reason that this study was conducted in a private kindergarten rather than in a first- or second-grade classroom is basically one of convenience and flexibility. Without evidence that the task was feasible, we were reluctant to ask to restructure or disrupt 4-6 hours of instructional time in a classroom.

Procedures

Over 14 days, at our request, the regular classroom teacher read 10 books to the class at times normal for such an activity and in the way she normally would read to the children, showing the illustrations and answering questions. The 10 books, read in the order in which they are listed, were:

1. Dr. Seuss: The Lorax. New York: Random House, 1971.
2. Margaret Wise Brown: Wait Till the Moon is Full. New York: Harper & Row, 1948.
3. Bill Peet: The Ant and the Elephant. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972.
4. Virginia Kahl: The Habits of Rabbits. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957.
5. Beatrix Potter: The Tale of Mr. Jeremy Fisher. New York: Warne, 1906.
6. Dr. Seuss: Happy Birthday to You. New York: Random House, 1959.
7. Margaret Wise Brown: The Runaway Bunny. New York: Harper & Row, 1942.
8. Bill Peet: Big Bad Bruce. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977.
9. Virginia Kahl: The Baron's Booty. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963.
10. Beatrix Potter: The Tale of Peter Rabbit. New York: Warne, 1902.

Shortly after the last book was read to the group, the investigators prepared the group for the new task of indicating their identification of new stories with the following task:

Five-page booklets were distributed to the children. On each page of the booklets five pictures had been photocopied in black and white. Each picture represented a major character from a book by a different one of the five authors mentioned above. In every case the character came from one of

the books read to the children in class, and with only one exception, the character's name occurred in the title of the book. The same five pictures appeared on each page but were arranged in different orders. For each page, the children were asked to put a crayon mark on "the picture that looks like it was drawn by the person who drew the pictures in [title] and [title]"; the two titles by each author were cited in turn. This was an unusual task for the children and a few seemed puzzled by it. Though most seemed to know the correct answers, some may have been distracted by wondering why we would ask something so obvious. The investigators also observed in at least one case that a child would point to the correct answer, but for some reason could not be persuaded to mark it. The children got from 2-5 correct.

Number correct	2	3	4	5	Total
Number of children	4	5	1	3	13

Then, five tape recordings of other stories by the same authors were played individually to each child. The stories on the tapes were

1. Dr. Seuss: I Had Trouble in Getting to Solla Sollew. New York: Random House, 1965.
2. Beatrix Potter: The Tale of Two Bad Mice. New York: Warne, 1904.
3. Bill Peet: Eli. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978.
4. Margaret Wise Brown: Fox Eyes. New York: Pantheon Books, 1951.
5. Margaret Wise Brown: The Little Fur Family. New York: Harper & Row, 1946.

6. Virginia Kahl: The Perfect Pancake. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960.

7. Virginia Kahl: How do you Hide a Monster? New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971.

Each child heard the tapes in a different order. Some children heard two stories by one author and one each by 3 others, and some children heard one story by each author. Thus, not all the children heard all the authors. This was intended to serve as a quality control device. Unfortunately, one-third of the children in the second condition did not complete the task, and the behavior of only four subjects seemed an insufficient basis on which to draw conclusions.

Before each story, the children were told that at the end of the story they would be asked to think about which of the books read by the teacher the new story most reminded them of. The children were also told that when the story was over, they would be asked to make a mark on a picture in a booklet similar or identical to one used in the illustration identification task. Not all booklets were identical: The children who heard two stories by the same author had five 4-item pages, while those who heard one story by each author had five 5-item pages.

When each story was over, the researcher read these instructions to the child:

> If you think this story was written by Beatrix Potter, who wrote the stories about Peter Rabbit and Jeremy Fisher, put a mark on the picture of Peter Rabbit.

If you think the story you just heard was written by Virginia Kahl, who wrote the stories about Gunhilde and the rabbits, put a mark on the picture of Gunhilde.

If you think that the story was written by Margaret Wise Brown, who wrote the stories about the Runaway Bunny and the raccoon who wanted to go out at night, put a mark on the little raccoon's picture.

If you think the story was written by Dr. Seuss, who wrote the stories about the Lorax and the Birthday Bird, put a mark on the picture of the Lorax.

[5-item group only] If you think the story was written by Bill Peet, who wrote the stories about Big Bad Bruce and the ant and the elephant, put a mark on the picture of the bear.

After the child had marked a choice, the researcher asked the child:

Have you ever heard this story before?
How did you know it was that one?
Tell me something about the story that made you know who wrote it.

We did not expect to get much in the way of revealing or even true answers to such questions (5-year-olds have been observed to have no qualms about making up answers to such questions out of whole cloth), but anything indicating awareness of any stylistic property would be significant.

Responses fell into one of 3 categories. Many were either "off the wall" or simply uninformative. For example,

	Child	Correct match?
[How did you know it was that one?]		
Well, my dad told me.	10	yes
Well, because we read the Lorax and it was part of the circle.	7	yes
Because I heard it in my classroom before.	2	no
I just knew. I was just thinking in my head. I remembered in my mind who it was always written by.	7	no

A good number, however, seem to indicate at least a vague awareness of style.

[How did you know it was that one?]		
Because . . . uh . . . because they were talking the same.	8	yes
Um, because of how they were talking.	3	yes
Well, it sounds like she's the one (pause) that was talking. It really sounds like the Lorax girl. See, in little parts of it it sounded like she was talking. And she was talking in the Lorax, I think, because she sounds the same as the Lorax girl.	1	yes

And a few comments showed that at least one child was conscious of certain determinants of style:

[How did you know that it was that one?]
Because I heard the story of Big Bad Bruce
and they said something about the
". . . nort, and they said it too. 8 yes

Most of the children, predictably, did not have the concentration to perform the entire task at a single sitting (about 55 minutes), and did one or two stories at a time. Three or four children did have the concentration to do this, however, (two of these were readers) and several were so intrigued with the task of guessing the authorship that they interrupted the tape to tell us the author (usually correctly) and preferred, contrary to our expectations, to go on to the next tape, rather than hear the end of the story. (Perhaps it is relevant that this part of the experiment was not conducted under the best of circumstances: The tapes were unfortunately excessively "noisy," and the listening accommodations were not particularly comfortable--usually the floor of a small room that was not in use.) Children were allowed to discontinue the experiment at any time if they did not wish to go on. Three children did not complete the task. One listened to 4 out of 5 stories, one to 3 out of 5, one to 2 out of 5.

Selection of Task

For testing kindergarteners' ability to recognize literary style, we considered a number of tasks. A simple recognition task, wherein a child would be asked if a passage had been heard before, was rejected as not directly tapping the abilities we wanted to test. A 2 x 2 forced-choice task (matching unfamiliar [or familiar] passages with familiar authors' names two at a time) was rejected as not very informative, since making one incorrect answer practically entailed making another, and vice versa, one correct answer practically entailed making another correct answer. A 2-out-of-3 (or more) matching task, where a child would be asked to say which two passages out of a group were by the same author, was rejected as logistically unfeasible for nonreaders: The passages would have to be presented orally, and we judged that it would be asking too much to ask children to remember three or more passages and their order of presentation, in order to say which two were most alike.

We wanted to make the task as difficult as we could and still get better-than-chance performance so that it would test the limits of the childrens' ability and so that the results would be as informative as we could manage. For this reason, we settled on a 1-out-of-5 multiple-choice style-matching task, with the test materials containing as few non-style-related clues as possible.

Selection of Materials

Selection of materials was not a matter to be taken lightly. Preliminary investigation indicated that children might use subject-matter or characters' names to decide authorship. For example, in a similar forced-choice task, the primary investigator's 5-year-old daughter correctly chose "the author of the Babar books" as the author of an unfamiliar paragraph referring to an individual named Arthur, and "the author of Hi, Cat and Whistle for Willie" as the author of an unfamiliar paragraph referring to a dog named Willie. When questioned, she replied that she had made her judgments on the basis of the name Arthur and the name Willie, respectively. Thus, our materials had to meet all of the following criteria:

1. Author had to have a distinct style. If we were not able, intuitively, to identify an author's works as stylistically unique, we did not consider her or his works as candidates for inclusion in the study. This eliminated a number of authors, including Ezra Jack Keats and Robert McCloskey.

2. Author had to have written at least three books which were not all about the same unique subject matter. This ruled out, e.g., Jay Williams, among whose books we could find only one that was not about princesses or kings.

3. Author had to have written at least two books with nonoverlapping sets of characters. This, regrettably, ruled out many authors with strongly individual styles, for example, the de Brunhoffs, authors of the Babar books.[3]

4. We had to have access to at least three books by the author that shared a distinct style. This eliminated such stylistically interesting authors as Maurice Sendak and Rosemary Wells, since we couldn't find three books (on the shelf at the local library) that met our other criteria and shared the same style.

5. At least one of the books, and preferably all three, had to have a text which could present the story independently of the illustration, so that (a) the familiarization stories could be equally well assimilated by children sitting farther from the teacher and by children clustered closely around her, and (b) the taped story would not be incomprehensible.

The testing had to be done with tapes of the books rather than exemplars, even exemplars that obliterated the author's name, in order to eliminate the possibility that the children might identify the authorship by identifying the illustrations, which in most cases here were done by the author. Also, we wanted to eliminate the graphics (type face, layout) as a possible source of identification. Having observed that at least some 2-year-olds can recognize these things, we presumed that many 5-year-olds probably could also do this.[4]

What we eventually ended up with was the following: two authors who wrote in rhymed couplets and used lots of long words: Dr. Seuss and Virginia Kahl; two authors who wrote about anthropomorphized animals whose behavior was apparently intended to resemble that of children: Beatrix Potter and Margaret Wise Brown; and one author who wrote about

anthropomorphized animals whose behavior was intended to resemble that of adults with diverse human failings: Bill Peet.

In deciding which books would be used in familiarization and which in testing, we consulted the teacher in order to avoid using as a test book one which she had previously read to the children. We could not, of course, be sure that none of the children had heard any of the test books at some prior time, but we know of only one case where a child had previously heard or read one of the test books, the Dr. Seuss one. This child correctly identified the authorship of all of the other test books.

Finding five authors who met all of our criteria was very difficult. In the initial planning of the study, we feared that including Dr. Seuss might bias the experiment in favor of the hypothesis. However, the discovery of Virginia Kahl allowed us to include both authors in the study. Both write silly fantasy involving humans in rhymed anapestic tetrameter. Samples are reproduced here.

"They have vanished, they've all disappeared from our sight.
Our dear little daughters give one such a fright." (Virginia Kahl, The Baron's Booty)

But I'm also in charge of the brown Bar-ba-loots
Who play'd in the shade in their Bar-ba-loot suits.
(Dr. Seuss, The Lorax)

Discrimination between these two writers has to be done on such relatively subtle linguistic cues as Dr. Seuss's made-up species (Bar-ba-loots), compound nouns (Bar-ba-loot suits, Super-Axe-Hacker), and very colloquial language (whack, smacker, crummies) as opposed to Virginia Kahl's more pretentious syntax and recherché vocabulary (toothsome, delectable, savoury). As it turned out, the Dr. Seuss story was identified correctly 7 out of 12 times; one Kahl story was identified correctly 4 out of 11 times, the other once in two trials. Among the six children who identified the authorship of three or more of the stories correctly, the Dr. Seuss story was misidentified only once (as being written by Kahl), and the Kahl story was misidentified twice.

Similarly, by choosing three animal story authors, we hoped to eliminate topic as a cue to authorship, and force the judgments to depend on subtler cues: Brown's stories are repetitious, her sentences vaguely rhythmical, Potter uses British Victorian words and phrases; Peet's style is earthier than those of the two women, his characters more bad-tempered and his stories a little more violent. Indicative samples are reproduced here.

> "If you are a gardener and find me," said the little bunny,
> "I will be a bird and fly away from you."
> "If you become a bird and fly away from me," said his mother,
> "I will be a tree that you come home to."
> (Margaret Wise Brown, The Runaway Bunny)

Peter gave himself up for lost, and shed big tears; but his sobs were

overheard by some friendly sparrows, who flew to him in great excitement, and implored him to exert himself. (Beatrix Potter, The Tale of Peter Rabbit)

"Where in blazes did you come from?!!" she shrieked, giving the boulder a vicious kick. (Bill Peet, Big Bad Bruce)

The Potter book (The Tale of Two Bad Mice) was correctly identified 4 times out of 11; the Brown books (Fox Eyes and Little Fur Family), 7 times out of 13, and 1 time out of 4, respectively; and the Peet book (Eli), 2 times out of 6. Among the six children who correctly identified the authorship of three or more books, Fox Eyes was correctly identified 5 out of 6 times, and Little Fur Family, 1 time out of 2; The Tale of Two Bad Mice was correctly identified 4 times out of 6, and Eli, 2 times out of 4. Four of these 6 misidentifications incorrectly identified authorship as being Kahl's, one as Seuss's. One child said Fox Eyes was most like the books by Beatrix Potter.

Results

The group of children who participated in the pilot divides into two natural subgroups on the basis of their participation: those who got three or more correct, and those who got 0 or 1 correct.

Insert Figure 1 about here

The probability of choosing the correct item out of five is 0.2. The probability of doing this three or more times in five trials is around 0.06. This means that six children performed at a level of accuracy highly unlikely to be attributable to chance. The other seven performed with far below chance accuracy. In other words, nearly half the group performed in such a fashion as to imply that their comprehension of stories was not limited to vague outlines of plot and characterization, but extended to appreciation of the subtler rhetorical and linguistic aspects of style. Apparently the other half of the group either (a) misunderstood the task, (b) did not attend to the discriminants of style, or (c) fixed upon arbitrary guessing strategies: One of this group of six children chose the first item on every page of the booklet. (The child who got four correct correctly chose the first item on the first four pages of her booklet. From her comments during the task and from the fact that her last [incorrect] answer was not the first item, we doubt that this indicates a blind answering strategy.)

Correlations

There was no apparent correlation of the percentage correct with the subjects' age or sex.

Insert Table 1 about here

Furthermore, there was no direct correlation between the children's ability to do well on the illustration pretest and their ability to perform the style recognition task. This indicates that performance of the style recognition task is not a simple function of intelligence or ability to follow directions. Specifically, of the 10 children who completed the style recognition task, the three children who did best (all 5 correct) on the illustration recognition task got 0 or 1 correct on the style recognition task. The children who did poorest (2 correct) on the illustration task, with one exception, got 0 or 1 correct on the style recognition task. But (with one exception, a child who did poorly on the illustration task) children who did moderately well on the illustration task (3-4 correct) got 3-5 correct on the style recognition task.

A possible explanation for this is that the group that got 100% correct on the illustration task were accustomed to attending much more to the illustrations in listening to stories than to rhetorical and linguistic properties of the text, and that most of the children in the group that did poorest on the illustration task simply were not accustomed to attending to either style or illustrations in listening to stories. But the reason that the children who did best on the style recognition task did only moderately well in recognizing illustrations is perhaps that their concentration on the aspects of literary style that allowed them to recognize authorship precluded their paying more attention to the illustrations.

In the absence, however, of confirmatory observations of the individual children, it seems just as justifiable to attribute the gap between the 0-1

correct group and the 3-5 correct group to individual differences (e.g., sensitivity to language) or linguistic maturity. Another possibility is that the children in the 0-1 correct group simply had less prior experience with the authors whose style we chose to investigate.

Implications

Implications of the Results, if Validated

This study appears to show that at least some 5-year-olds have the ability to appreciate and discriminate among the literary styles available in trade publications intended for the 3- to 7-year-old group. Indeed, several children found the challenge of testing this ability exhilarating. Supposing that it is valid to extrapolate from the population tested to a representative group of 6 1/2- or 7-year-olds who have the ability to read words they have never read before, we could expect that approximately half of the children could be enjoying real children's literature instead of the colorless, lifeless, gutted, controlled, and graded texts that they are condemned to read--even if they are given the privilege of reading the next grade's books. And this extrapolation takes no account of the greater sophistication that children 15 months older may be expected to have.

If replications and extensions of this study bear out its results, then there are three direct implications for instructional practices.

1. The publishers of basal readers, at least after the first reader, should relax their stringent sentence-length and passage-length requirements and include as much real children's literature as possible, literature by children's authors, not by nameless hacks;

literature written for children, not for the formulae of Spache or Fry or Flesch or Dale-Chall. At the very least, postprimer readers need not be edited to such uniform standards as are traditional, but could approach the variety of styles available in trade books.[5]

2. Those responsible for determining instructional materials for primary-grade classes should consider dispensing entirely with basal series, at least after the first reader, and organize their programs around the more exciting trade materials available. Much such material is already available very inexpensively from such organizations as Scholastic Book Services.

3. Reading organizations and other education organizations should undertake to persuade legislative bodies of the folly of requiring a whole state's or district's textbooks to conform to artificial grading formulae, so that 1 and/or 2 above could be economically implemented.

The objection is likely to be raised that the fact that 5-year-olds can appreciate the differences between works by Beatrix Potter and Margaret Wise Brown does not mean that 7-year-olds could read the works of either author independently, that 7-year-olds have enough trouble reading the "colorless, lifeless" prose in the basals. It is certainly true that there is no direct entailment from what 5-year-olds can comprehend orally to what 7-year-olds can independently read, but I think this study suggests that 7-year-olds <u>might</u> be able to read Margaret Wise Brown and Beatrix Potter; the fact that some have trouble with second-grade basals might be due to stylistic properties of the basals that are <u>introduced</u> in the process of writing a

graded reader. Davison, Kantor, Hannah, Hermon, Lutz, and Salzillo (1980) have shown that many of the devices used in adapting a text to meet sentence-length, vocabulary, and passage-length requirements contribute to a marked decrease in the coherence and interest of the text. In addition, it is a basic principle of attention theory that perceptual activities which demand more mental processing tend to be favored over less demanding activities (Hardiman & Zernich, 1978). The fact that some 7-year-olds have trouble with grade-level basal readers may be a problem of motivation; it may be that they would do better on more complex, more difficult, more challenging material.

There is a further argument to be made in favor of providing as instructional material texts that are more challenging, an argument which is so obvious that it is a wonder it is not made more often. If children are not exposed to "difficult" words like <u>because</u> or <u>if</u> or <u>might</u> (these are "second-grade words" in most basal series) or "complex" structures like result clauses or relative clauses or concessive clauses, or even 16-word sentences, because they are "too hard," how is the child supposed to learn to deal with them? There are only two conceivable reasons for delaying them, and neither of them is sufficient.

1. "The child is not familiar with such constructions until a later age."

   Horse puckey. Listen to 5- and 6-year-old children speaking unselfconsciously. They use most of these constructions in their own speech, and the only way they will learn the others is by reading them, because they are largely written-register constructions.

2. "Using such constructions will make sentences too long for beginning readers to read without losing track of their content and reaching their frustration level."

Is there really evidence for this? It is hard to believe that a child who can read unfamiliar 9-word sentences with reasonable fluency would be reduced to unutterable confusion by a 16-word sentence.

The argument that children must be given materials that challenge them has not had much currency. Perhaps the reason for this is that unreasonable inferences have been unnecessarily drawn from the reasonable dictum that children learn best when they feel they are succeeding. Two such inferences have to do with the definition of success. If success means properly articulating every syllable in oral reading, and giving evidence of gleaning every shred of meaning from a text, of course children are unlikely to satisfy teachers who demand 100% success or even 75% success at every trial (e.g., every recitation), and are likely to react negatively to such an impossible task. But there is no need to demand such a high level of accuracy for daily recitation, and there is no need for children who are performing at a less-than-perfect level to feel they are not succeeding. If challenges met successfully are applauded, and incorrect choices and answers are corrected unobtrusively (e.g., by pronouncing an incorrectly pronounced word in a question about something else) and with insight into their source (Dieterich, Larkin, Freeman, & Yanofsky, 1979), then children who perform with less than, say, 80% accuracy can rightfully feel successful, too.

Finally, there is the argument that successfully meeting a challenge is itself a source of pleasure and satisfaction. As Bishop (1935, p. 204) put it, 45 years ago, in a critical review of the Thorndike Library:

> It is pathetic and contrary to life to be confronted only with what one can understand, and children who read the title-page of the Thorndike edition--"edited to fit the interest and abilities of young readers"--will very likely lay the book aside, because if there is anything a child dislikes, or any one at any age for that matter, it is to have something handed to him and announced as being specially prepared to meet his understanding.

Doesn't depriving children of the satisfaction of meeting a challenge contribute to making learning to read an unpleasant experience?

In any case, the hypothesis would seem to merit further investigation. The following section outlines one experiment which would speak directly to the issue.

Implications for Further Testing

To find out what 7-year-olds are capable of, you have to test 7-year-olds. An ideal study would use a population (more representative than that used in this study) of 7-year-olds who could read at least at the level of the primer or first reader. Instead of presenting the texts orally, and on tape, familiarization texts could be read independently (or orally by the teacher or investigator), and the test materials could be presented retyped, in primary-size type, preserving the layout, but not the type face or

illustrations of the original. It might not be necessary to reproduce entire texts; it might be sufficient to reproduce representative paragraphs. An attempt could be made to correlate individual scores with IQ, tested reading level, history of being read to at ages 3-5, and readability scores on the test materials, as well as with the usual things (age, sex, parents' SES, etc.).

The same texts could be used as were used in this pilot, but it might prove revealing to add a few authors (not of picture books) not used here, such as Kipling ("Just-So Stories"), L. Frank Baum (Oz stories), and Betty MacDonald (Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle stories), and in addition, stories from a basal reader. Testing would have to use carefully selected paragraphs rather than entire texts, because of the recurrence of characters in the works of some of the authors.

Conclusion

Six kindergarteners out of thirteen tested were able to correctly identify at a rate well above chance the authorship of works they had not, to our knowledge, been exposed to. This task was accomplished presumably on the basis of perceived similarities to other works by the same authors, to which they had been exposed, via a single reading of each of two other books per author tested.

If this ability is present, which remains to be seen, in children learning to read, and is demonstrable using materials the children read themselves, which also remains to be seen, then it would seem to constitute a prima facie argument for altering current instructional practice and/or

basal reader editing in such a way as to capitalize on this ability by including in instruction more actual literature with appreciable style, despite the fact that it may not meet the rigid and arbitrary traditional readability criteria.

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Footnotes

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[1]A note on literary style. We take it for granted that there is such a thing as literary style, and that it is literary style, among other things, that distinguishes the prose of, say, Dostoyevsky, from that of, say, Donald Barthelme. We use literary style as a cover term to refer to those aspects of sentence construction, vocabulary choice, rhetorical devices, plot and character development, etc. (but not subject matter) that distinguish the work of one author from that of another.

Our research does not depend on any particular theory of literary style; thus, we have not found it appropriate to include any surveys of theories of literary style. The reader is referred to Enkvist (1964) and Hough (1969) for general discussion of the problems of defining "style."

[2]Bader (1976) refers to picture books as "an art form [which] hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages" (p. 1). We use this term to refer generally to books intended for children where at least one-half of every opening (two page spread) is illustration or white space.

[3]We considered including such authors, and changing the characters' names so as not to "give away" the authorship. We rejected this strategy however, on the grounds that (a) the kinds of names an author chooses are an

aspect of style, and we did not want to compromise the integrity of the experiment by meddling with even one aspect of an author's style, and (b) if a child did know such an author's works well, it might be unfairly confusing to ask for judgment on a work that both is and isn't that author's.

[4]At 2 1/2, the primary investigator's daughter insisted that she already owned gift books which she had in fact never seen before, saying that she recognized the pictures. In fact, she owned different books illustrated by the same illustrators (Tom O'Sullivan and Lionel Kalish). In both cases the books illustrated by the same artist had different authors.

At 2, the primary investigator's son "read" Crest, Sears, Special K, etc. by recognizing the type design. This is apparently not unusual. For months, however, he insisted that a certain supermarket was an ice cream store, despite regular correction. It turned out that the lettering on the store's sign was very similar to that used by the Baskin-Robbins chain.

[5]The publishers of basals have (commendably) begun to include selections by genuine children's authors, but more often than not, even these are adapted to meet publishers' readability formulae.

Table 1

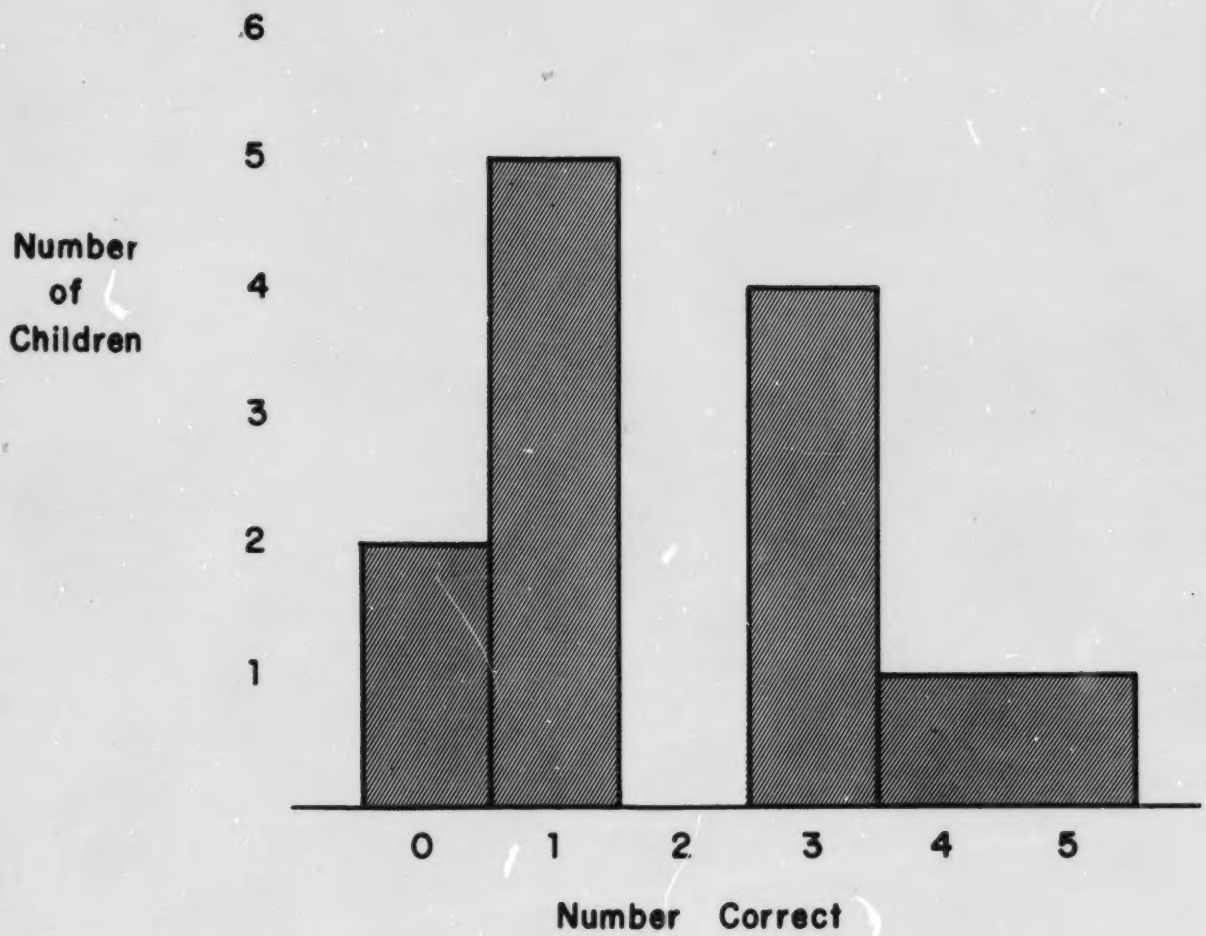
Comparison of Number of Correct Responses

with Age and with Sex

Average Age of:	
Total Group	64.3 months
3-5 Correct Group	64.8 months
0-1 Correct Group	63.8 months
Percentage of Girls in:	
Total Group	.38 (5/13)
3-5 Correct Group	.33 (2/6)
0-1 Correct Group	.43 (3/7)

Figure Caption

Figure 1. Subjects' assessment of authorship of an unfamiliar text by a familiar author.


Number of Children
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
1
2
3
4
5
Number Correct

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